

Claims

1. A method of operating on a coloured digitised image in a computer to derive therefrom the image in abstract computer representation, comprising the steps of:

5 (a) creating a digital image in a plurality of colours, with each colour representing an assigned set of features of the image;

(b) storing in the computer for each possible feature

(i) one or more characteristic signatures of its graphical representation,

(ii) its associated abstract computer representation, and

10 (iii) the associated set to which the feature belongs;

(c) segmenting the digitised image from step (a) into its respective colours;

(d) selecting one feature of one of the segmented colours of step (c) and comparing the selected feature with each feature of each of the sets stored in the computer at step (b);

15 (e) identifying a match for the feature selected in step (d), and assigning to the set of stored features containing the matched feature the associated segmented colour;

(f) comparing each feature of the matched segmented colour of the digitised image with all the stored features of the associated segmented colour and identifying matches therebetween, thereby to derive for each feature in digitised graphic
20 representation a respective matched feature in computer representation; and

(g) repeating steps (d), (e), and (f) for other segmented colours, thereby to assign each colour to a respective one of the sets of features stored in the computer in computer representation and to match features of the digitised image with respective ones of the features stored in the computer.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the matching obtained in step (e) comprises the best match between a selected feature of the digital image and the stored features in abstract computer representation.

5 3. A method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the digital image contains one set of features in one, and only one, more colour than the number of assigned sets stored in the computer in step (b), whereby for said coloured set of features no match is obtainable in step (e), and no derivation is effected in step (f).

10 4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the non-assigned set of features comprises sketches.

5. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the sets of features comprise letters, digits, icons or symbols.

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6. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the digital image is inputted into the computer by means of 'paint' software.

7. A method according to any one claims 1 to 5, wherein a coloured image is
20 drawn manually, is scanned by a colour scanner, and is then stored in the computer as the digital image.